

Little Girls Wiser Than Men



Lev Tolstoy

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It was an early Easter. Sledging was just over. Snow still lay in the yards, and water ran in streams across the village. Between two yards, out of manure, a big puddle filled up. And two girls from different houses came to the puddle - one smaller, another a little older. Their mothers had dressed them both in new frocks. Blue one - on little girl, and yellow - on the elder. Both had red scarfs on their heads. After Mass, girls came to the puddle, showed each other their dresses and began to play. And they wanted to splash in the water. The little one went in the puddle with her shoes, and the elder one said:

- Don't go in, Malasha, your mother will scold you. Let me take the shoes off, and you do the same.

The girls took their shoes off, lifted their skirts, and went through the puddle toward each other. Malashka went in, up to her ankles, and says:

- It's deep, Akuljushka, I'm afraid.

- That's OK, - the other one said - it won't get any deeper. Go right at me.

They came closer to each other. And Akulka says:

- You, Malasha, be sure not to splash, but walk carefully.

She just said that, but Malashka plopped her foot over the water - and it splashed right on Akulka's dress. Dress got spattered, and some went on her nose and eyes. Akulka saw stains on her dress, got angry at Malashka, scolded, ran after her, wanted to slap her. Malashka scared, saw that she caused trouble, jumped out of the puddle, ran home. Akulka's mother walked past, saw - her daughter's frock was spattered and shirt was dirty.

- Where did you, naughty girl, soil yourself?

- Malashka spattered me, on purpose.

Akulka's mother grabbed Malashka, and slapped her on the back of her head. Malashka wailed so she was heard across the street. Malashka's mother came out.

- What do you hit my daughter for? – She started scolding her neighbor. Word after word, women quarreled. Men jumped out, gathered on the street in a large bunch. All shout, nobody is listening to each other. Quarreled, quarreled, one pushed the other, a fight almost started, but an old woman, Akulka's grandmother, stepped in. She came in the middle of the men and began to coax:

- What are you, dear, doing, it such days? We should rejoice, but you started such a sin.

They didn't listen to the old woman, nearly knocked her off her feet. And the old woman wouldn't persuade them, if it weren't for Akulka with Malashka.

While the women cursed each other, Akulka had wiped the mud off her frock, and came out again to the pathway with the puddle. Picked up a stone and began to scrape the ground to let the water out into the street. While she was scraping, Malashka came up and began to help her, also digging a channel with a tiny chip of wood.

Guys just began to fight, when the girls' water ran by the groove, by the street, and into the creek. Girls put the wooden chip into the water. The stream carried the chip across the street, right to the place where the old woman was taking the men apart. The girls are running - one from one side, another from the other side of the stream.

- Catch it, Malasha, catch it! – shouts Akulka. Malasha also wants to say something, but can't help laughing.

So the girls are running, laughing at the chip as it dives in the stream. And they ran straight in between the men. The old woman saw them and said to the men:

- Fear God, you guys, dragged yourself into a fight because of these girls, and

they have long time ago forgotten everything - again are in love together, blessed, playing. They are wiser than you!

The men looked at the girls, and got embarrassed. But then they laughed at themselves, and went to back to their homes.

"Unless ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of God".